

Workshop on Contributions to Open Source Software by Public Institutions

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Background, Goals, and Target Audience

Governments, universities, and other public institutions do not only use open source software (OSS) but also contribute to existing OSS projects or even initiate new OSS communities. Public administrations such as City of Munich are actively involved in the development of LibreOffice (City of Munich 2012; Sneddon 2015), others like the Swiss Federal Office of Topography swisstopo supported the OpenLayers 3 implementation substantially via an international crowdfunding campaign (Moulet 2014). Starting a new OSS project may simply mean publishing source code on public repositories as the UK government is doing on GitHub¹ using the *GitHub and Government* service². Or it may also include establishing governance rules as the Swiss Federal Court did when releasing its internal court decision administration system thus initiating the OSS project OpenJustitia (Brunner 2013).

Contributing to OSS has benefits such as lower development cost or increased transparency. Reducing IT spending is the major motivator for Swiss cantons collaboratively developing CAMAC, an open source construction permit system (Moser 2015). Transparency of the software is the reason why the Canton of Geneva plans to open-source its e-voting platform (Geneva State Chancellery 2010; Atmani 2015). Obviously committing source code and managing OSS projects does involve various challenges such as governance of user communities, establishing institutional structures, funding of ongoing development, effective release management or collaboration of public institutions with firms and volunteers.

The goal of this workshop is to share experiences and discuss solutions on how to increase contributions of public institutions to OSS and improve collaboration among all stakeholders. This workshop is targeted to practitioners with or without experience in managing OSS communities as well as academics researching governance and development processes within OSS projects.

¹ <https://github.com/alphagov>

² <https://government.github.com>

Topics of the workshop

The workshop addresses, but is not limited to, the following topics:

- Identification of relevant incentives, advantages, challenges, and problem-solving approaches regarding contributions to OSS by public institutions
- Presentation of case studies, success stories as well as failures and lessons learned when public institutions contribute to OSS
- Sharing of good practices in solving organizational, technical, financial, and legal issues of OSS projects involving public institutions
- Development of guidelines, whitepapers etc. for public institutions on how to successfully conduct OSS contributions and launch new projects

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